

Message Text

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INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY
AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
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AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMEMBASSY DACCA
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 5288

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV, PINR, IN
SUBJ: BIO DATA ON RAVINDRA VARMA, MINISTER OF PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS AND LABOR

1. A MEMBER OF THE ROYAL FAMILY OF TRAVANCORE IN KERALA, RAVINDRA VARMA BEGAN HIS CAREER AS AN ACTIVIST IN YOUTH AND STUDENT AFFAIRS AND EVENTUALLY ENTERED INDIAN POLITICS IN THE EARLY 1960'S. BORN APRIL 18, 1925 IN KERALA, HE MAJORED IN ECONOMICS AT TRAVANCORE UNIVERSITY AND MADRAS UNIVERSITY. DURING HIS YEARS AS A YOUTH LEADER IN THE 1940'S AND 1950'S HE TRAVELLED EXTENSIVELY IN THE US, AFRICA, ASIA AND EUROPE AS A MEMBER OF INDIAN STUDENT DELEGATIONS. AS PRESIDENT OF THE ALL-INDIA YOUTH CONGRESS HE VISITED CZECHOSLOVAKIA, THE PRC, BELGIUM, YUGOSLAVIA AND THE US. VARMA SERVED AS INTERNATIONAL PRESIDENT
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OF THE WORLD ASSEMBLY OF YOUTH FOR TWO TERMS (1958-62) BEFORE ENTERING DOMESTIC POLITICS IN INDIA. A CONGRESS MEMBER OF THE LOK SABHA FROM 1962 TO 1967, VARMA WAS CONSIDERED ONE OF PARLIAMENT'S BRIGHTEST AND MOST ARTICULATE MEMBERS. DESPITE HIS YOUTH AND JUNIOR STATUS AS AN MP, HE PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN PARLIAMENTARY PROCEEDINGS IN THE MID-1960'S AND

SERVED AS A MEMBER OF THE CONGRESS PARTY EXECUTIVE.

2. KNOWN TO BE CONSERVATIVE AND RIGHTIST, VARMA WAS CLOSE TO MORARJI DESAI IN THE 1960'S AND SUPPORTED HIM FOR THE PRIME MINISTERSHIP IN 1964 AND 1966. HE JOINED THE CONGRESS (O) FOLLOWING THE 1969 PARTY SPLIT. ALTHOUGH POLITICALLY INACTIVE IN THE TWO YEARS FOLLOWING THE SPLIT (HE DID NOT CONTEST A SEAT IN THE 1971 ELECTIONS), HE SERVED AS A GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE CONGRESS (O) AICC FROM 1971 TO 1973. AFTER THE PROCLAMATION OF THE EMERGENCY, VARMA ACTED FOR SOME TIME AS THE SECRETARY OF THE LOK SANGHARSH SAMITI (PEOPLE'S STRUGGLE COMMITTEE) BEFORE BEING ARRESTED. HE WAS RELEASED FROM JAIL IN LATE JANUARY 1977. IN THE RECENT ELECTIONS, J P NARAYAN REPORTEDLY CHOSE HIM AS THE JANATA CANDIDATE FOR THE RANCHI (BIHAR) LOK SABHA CONSTITUENCY, A SEAT WHICH HE WON BY OVER 70,000 VOTES.

3. VARMA WAS WELL KNOWN TO SEVERAL EMBASSY OFFICERS WHILE IN PARLIAMENT IN THE 1960'S AND WAS REGARDED AS BEING EXTREMELY WELL INFORMED ON INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS. EMBASSY OFFICERS DESCRIBED HIM AS STOUTLY PRO-WESTERN AND FRIENDLY IN CONTACTS WITH AMERICANS. HE WAS VIGOROUSLY ATTACKED IN LEFT-WING JOURNALS AT THE TIME FOR HIS VIEWS. AT THE SAME TIME, HE WAS DESCRIBED AS A NATIONALIST AND A HARDLINER ON KASHMIR AND PAKISTAN.
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